

7-27-2012

Dean Logan's Blog: Amazing Summers!

Roger Williams University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/law_pubs_blogs

Recommended Citation

Roger Williams University School of Law, "Dean Logan's Blog: Amazing Summers!" (2012). *Law School Blogs*. 111.
https://docs.rwu.edu/law_pubs_blogs/111

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Law Publications at DOCS@RWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Law School Blogs by an authorized administrator of DOCS@RWU. For more information, please contact [mwu@rwu.edu](mailto:rwu@rwu.edu).

Dean Logan's Blog

Amazing Summers!

Posted by David Logan on 07/27/2012 at 12:49 PM

At RWU Law, we have a vigorous public interest program. This summer, 35 students were awarded summer stipends that enabled them to work in public interest jobs all over the world. The School of Law funds these stipends with money from the operating budget, and another chunk raised through our Public Interest Auction (Save the date for next year! February 15, 2013).

From Kathmandu to Los Angeles, and New Orleans to the Pentagon (and of course Rhode Island and Massachusetts!), our students pursued their dreams literally all over the globe. What follows is a smattering of the observations from some of our stipend recipients.

Some students are advocating for women and children's rights:

Devyn Noyce, '13

SAHARA Group

Kathmandu, Nepal

“
I am living and working in Kathmandu, Nepal this summer, with a not-for-profit organization called SAHARA Group (Social Awareness and Helping Activities in Rural Areas). SAHARA focuses on the promotion and protection of women's and children's rights. One major project involves the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and girls who have escaped the human trafficking industry. The group provides housing and skills training to help the women become independent and works within the communities these women are from to correct stereotypes and misconceptions about women who end up in the sex industry. This community awareness work enables the rescued women to return home and escape the damaging stigma they often confront.
”

“

I am working in the Kathmandu office editing the English in existing reports for donors, writing new reports about the various projects SAHARA is involved with, and updating the website. The office setting has been interesting as the power frequently goes out in the city, and I am the only non-Nepali in the office. I enjoyed travelling to SAHARA's women's shelter for victims of domestic violence in Pokhara, a city 8 hours away. I spent several days interviewing, observing, and evaluating the shelter in order to write a comprehensive report on the project's progress. Since I do not speak Nepali, I am traveling with a Nepali friend, who agreed to be my translator. I am very excited for this field visit since I am involved with a "Know Your Rights" presentation at a women's shelter in Providence through the Pro Bono Collaborative at RWU. My summer in Kathmandu is not how I envisioned spending my summers when I entered law school two years ago, but it has been a wonderful and rewarding experience, preparing me to be better able to serve in the public interest field when I return to Roger Williams in the fall and find a

”

career that takes me into an international field.



Sarah Oster, '13
Children's Law Center
Los Angeles, CA

“
Upon receiving my Children's Law Center of California training manual, I read through it eager to have an idea of what my summer would entail. When halfway through my manual there were instructions on how to respond to an earthquake or bomb threat in the courthouse, I realized my clerkship location, Los Angeles, would play a significant role in my experience!

Los Angeles has one of the largest foster care systems in the country. The Children's Law Center of California represents those foster children in court. Half of my clerkship is trial related and the other half involves research on policy. I have prepared motions, conducted trial preparation, and interviewed clients. One of my policy projects includes research on a foster youth's refusal of psychotropic medication. It's wonderful when things learned in the classroom are applicable in practice. Last semester I took Mental Health Law, and I am grateful that I did because I am applying what I learned in class to my work at
”
the Children's Law Center

“
I've also learned this area of law can be challenging, yet rewarding. I've worked on cases where the stories of abuse and neglect are unfathomable. Most of the cases in court involve foster youth who have been physically or sexually abused. While difficult, the main goal of representation is to determine what is in the best interests of each child. I am working on how to build a tougher exterior when I hear about these cases of abuse, while still remaining
”
compassionate towards clients.



Others are working to preserve the rights of immigrants:

Joceline Rocha, '14

Catholic Social Services – Immigration, Law, Education & Advocacy Project (ILEAP)

Fall River, MA

“
This summer, I have had the great opportunity to intern for the Immigration Law Education & Advocacy Project (ILEAP) at Catholic Social Services in Fall River, Mass. Currently, I am working on a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status case, assisting a nine year-old boy in acquiring legal status to avoid being deported to his home country. This is an extremely important case because it can make an incredible difference in the child's future.”

“
Remaining in the United States will mean that the child will be able to stay under the care of his primary caretaker, his mother, and have the ability to receive better educational, social and medical services. The public interest stipend has allowed me to work as a full-time intern at ILEAP and hopefully I will be able to make a difference in a young boy's life.”



Luis Mancheno '13
Resettlement Unit, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Washington, D.C.

“
I have been working for the US Regional Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Washington, D.C in the Resettlement Unit. This unit handles cases of people overseas who are under the mandate of UNHCR and have been recognized as refugees. I have focused on relocating people currently living in the Caribbean to a third country like the United States, Sweden, Australia or France. There are many reasons why a person who has been determined to be refugee would need to be resettled: the lack of rights or benefits in the host country, lack of appropriate protection, no viable safe integration to the community, or sometimes severe medical conditions.”

“
The access that I have had to legal resources, UN officials, conferences, and networking opportunities has been unmatched. More than anything, I am accomplishing the call of my life, which is to use my legal skills in order to help

the most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals. There is no way of explaining how it feels to help somebody who is in the same situation I was in a couple of years ago. I truly believe in the theme that UNHCR created for

Refugee Day this year: "One refugee without hope is too many."



Some students are working in Civil Legal Services, where low-income clients have no right to a lawyer, and the need for legal assistance abounds:

Michelle Santos, '14

New Haven Legal Assistance Association

New Haven, CT

“ I love my internship! I am working with the Family Law Unit which handles domestic violence cases. Since I want to eventually work with these victims, I could not have asked for a better situation. My supervising attorneys are so passionate and helpful in teaching me important things about family law. I have

been to court but I spend the majority of my days interviewing clients and helping them through the intense and difficult legal process of leaving an abusive situation.

Marcus Swift, '14
Rhode Island Legal Services
Providence, RI

“I've had the privilege of interning at Rhode Island Legal Services in Providence, dealing with Workers Rights. Rhode Island has a high unemployment rate and no one has been hit harder than our low-income clients who are struggling to stay afloat, who just want to work hard and support their families, and who are often easy targets. I've had the honor of working with an amazing mentor to help them out. I've had an incredible time and I'm truly thankful for the opportunity.”



Two students are working in public defender offices in the south where the need is tremendous:

Vanessa Colletto, '13

Knox County Public Defender

Knoxville, TN

“
The Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office has been treating me great. So far I have been preparing legal issues and motions for preliminary hearings and trials; I have also had an opportunity to appear in court and submitted some state-client agreements to the court. We have also toured the jail, homeless shelter, public housing projects, death row, an autopsy viewing, a handgun class, and a police-ride-along. I will start handling my own clients from the initial interview and negotiations with the DA, and hopefully through a preliminary hearing. The interns at the CLO here are also assigned to assist with murder defense teams as well as required to shadow a social worker in the office. The CLO is a holistic defense office and provides excellent social services to clients who need them, ranging from housing needs to psychological and mental health needs to employment help. I will be sitting in on a social services counseling session of one of my supervising attorney's clients later this week and am really looking forward to it. Other than that,
”
Tennessee is treating me pretty swell!



Asia Sierra-Millette, '14
Orleans Public Defenders
New Orleans, LA

“
I am a law clerk for the Orleans Public Defenders in New Orleans, LA and I have loved every minute of my experience. From the day I got here, I was given a crash course on Louisiana law and discovered that this state has some of the strictest sentencing laws in the country. Seeing the look on a client's face after hearing the sentencing range for the crime he's charged with is heartbreaking. My fellow clerks and I are not just here filing papers, making copies, and mailing letters; I have visited clients, helped draft motions, researched legal issues and brainstormed possible defense theories to assist my attorneys in upcoming trials. This experience has strengthened my desire to become a public defender when I finish school.”



And others worked in various aspects of the criminal justice system – including racial profiling, domestic violence, and public defense - in the Northeast:

Shannah Kurland, '13

PrYSM, Providence, RI

“
PrYSM - Providence Youth and Student Movement (www.prysm.us), is an organization working primarily with Southeast Asian youth to build leadership and confront violence that affects the Southeast Asian community. My work as an intern is an extension of the organization's ongoing campaign to stop racial profiling. Southeast Asian youth are often stopped by police while walking through their neighborhoods and accused of being gang members, photographed, and their names entered into a secret "gang database" maintained by the Providence Police Department.

“
Through the public interest stipend program, I'm training young people to lead Know Your Rights workshops with other youth in the community explaining how to stay safe and preserve their dignity during encounters for police. We are privileged to have as an advisor on this project retired Superior Court Judge (and adjunct RWU SOL faculty) Steven Fortunato, who is leading a discussion with young people in a couple of weeks on the possibilities and challenges of potential legal strategies to challenge police misconduct.

Shannon Dobransky, '14

Broome County District Attorney's Office

Binghamton, NY

“
In my relatively short stay at the DA's office, I have written numerous victim letters, searched for a missing witness, tracked down missing electronics for theft victims, and aided in the prosecution of a DWI trial from start to finish (a twelve-and-a-half-hour work day, nonetheless). The saddest observations have

been with the ADA who mainly handles sex offenses, followed closely by the interview we conducted with an alleged victim of domestic violence and her children.”

“*On a happier note, I’ve sat with Drug Treatment Court (“DTC”) graduates and was able to share in their life stories and hear the participants affirm how the DTC gave them the opportunity to avoid prison in exchange for treatment for their drug addictions. My stay at the DA’s office has taught me how imperative it is that all the main players (public defenders, assistant district attorneys, police officers, court clerks, judges, victims, etc.) work together to form a cohesive system. Endurance, integrity, and understanding seem to be the most important virtues the Assistant District Attorneys possess. In sum, the learning I’ve received at the DA’s office has been priceless.*”



Juliana McKittrick, '13

New Hampshire Public Defender

“
I am having a great time with the New Hampshire Public Defender. I am working on suppression motions, have been in court, worked on a cross examination, and I saw a jury trial from beginning to end. Everyone here has been very welcoming, and it turns out my attorney mentor/supervisor, Christine List, '07, is an alumna of RWUSOL. She is married to fellow alum, Kevin O'Keefe, '07, who is also a public defender at the New Hampshire PD.”

One of our students – a Second Lieutenant in the Army – is working at the Pentagon:

Tunde Adepegba, '14

“
I am interning for Army Headquarters at the Pentagon in the International and Operational Law Division for the Office of The Judge Advocate General. This has been one of the best experiences of my life. What makes my internship very different is that I am an intern; but, also Second Lieutenant in the Army. The Division sees me as a soldier first, so as a result, I wear my uniform daily. Some days I am in the office at 6:30 am to have secured Video Teleconferences (VTC) with JAG's around the world.”

“
There has been a variety of projects/assignments that I have been a part of including receiving classified legal briefings, escorting Distinguished Visitors from Liberia and Chile, planning a week-long program titled Brigade Judge Advocate Mission Primer (BJAMP) for lawyers being deployed to the Middle East and Guantanamo Bay, as well as reviewing and organizing international agreements with other nations. Furthermore, a large part of my internship is classified information; therefore, some details of my work cannot be shared.

Attached are two photos of me. The first is with the first Liberian legal advisors of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). Also, the female in the picture is the first

female officer in their military. The second picture is of me escorting the
Chilean Generals to the Supreme Court to meet Justice Ginsberg.”



And last but not least, several of our students are with the judiciary:

“
Jose Batista, '14

The Honorable Rafael Ovalles

Rhode Island District Court

This summer I have the privilege of interning with the Honorable Rafael Ovalles in Rhode Island District Court. I sit in the courtroom while the Judge is on the bench and then have conversations with him afterward. I truly get to see the courtroom from two different perspectives every day and I think that has helped me understand and solidify a lot of the concepts and strategies that are employed in the courtroom.

The most valuable thing I've taken away from this experience has been watching the convergence of topics into one fluid display in the courtroom. For example, during my first week I saw a lawyer move to dismiss a case on a 12(b)(6) motion. The case involved a property dispute between a landlord and a tenant. While in school we were taught Property and Civil Procedure separately, but here in court I have seen how two (or more) of the classes we've taken so far can come into play during the very same hearing or trial.

Nicole Verdi, '14

The Honorable John J. McConnell, Jr.

United States District Court - Rhode Island

“My internship experience has been GREAT! I'm able to learn so much and do so much. Not only have I created legal memoranda for the Judge and his clerks, but I was able to help draft a bench decision which was turned into an order. I also had the opportunity to suggest questions for the Judge to ask the attorneys during their arguments. My first year of law school definitely prepared me for this internship, and I believe this internship is preparing me for practice. This experience has made me even more excited about my law career. After seeing attorneys argue a case today, I am excited to someday be in their shoes, hopefully arguing before a federal judge.



Josh Xavier, '14

The Honorable John J. McConnell, Jr.

United States District Court – Rhode Island

“
This summer I am working for Judge McConnell as well as for the International Institute. I have learned a tremendous amount by working with Judge McConnell. I spend the majority of my time researching and writing, as well as informing Judge McConnell about relevant and applicable law. What impresses me most about Judge McConnell is his dedication to acknowledging the humanity of all the defendants that appear in his courtroom regardless of the crimes with which they have been charged. For instance, if friends and family members come to the court to support the defendant, Judge McConnell will ask the defendant to introduce them to him. Not only is Judge McConnell
bright and accomplished, he is one of the most humane judges I know.”

